

REMARKS

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Liu et al (US 6,481,610) in view of McGuinness et al (US 6,273,315) and Smith et al (US 4, 300,684). The examiner points out that Liu et al discloses a tube 31 with top and bottom openings 311, 310, washers 50 connected each other by string 51, McGuinness et al a feed mechanism comprised of spring 80 and push rod 82 for the purpose of providing uniform feeding force to fastening member during operation, and Smith teaches the items 14 are held together by a metal strip which includes a ring shaped head portion 22 and legs 22a and 22bm which have an enlarged portion at the end for the purpose of holding a group of items together prior to use. Liu et al discloses a closure element for the tube comprised of caps 32 and projection 321.

Responsive to this, claim 1 is amended and the specification is amended accordingly. Applicant adds a new limitation to the claim 1 and includes a circular central hole in each cap, and it is also noted that the connection cord in claim 1 of the instant application is a single cord when compared with the fastener of Smith et al.

Liu et al discloses a string 51 which connects the washers 50 and includes a bottom limiting member 510 which will be dropped out by the outlet 23. In other words, the string 51 cannot be used again to collect the stack of washers because the bottom limiting member 510 is separated from the string 51. On the contrary, the end piece 34 of the connection cord of the present invention will never be separated from the connection cord and can be used to collect the caps repeatedly. In other

words, although the string 51 of Liu et al can be pulled out from the stack of washers, it is useless after it is pulled out from one stack of washers, and the collection cord of the present invention can be used again and again. What McGuinness et al discloses is nothing to do with the connection cord.

Smith et al discloses that the fastener comprises a metal strip bent back along itself in a generally U-shaped so as to define a head portion 22, adjacent leg portions 22a and 22b, and each of such leg portions is preferably skewed slightly with respect to the other. The strip composed of two leg portions 22a, 22b is extended through a non-circular opening 20 defined through in each of the points 14. Each leg portion has an out-turned tab portion 22c and 22d which are used to be engaged with the notches 20a to 20d of the non-circular opening 20. The metal strip can be pulled from the non-circular openings of the items by twisting the head portion 22 and then pulling it out. However, the opening of Smith et al has to be non-circular as shown and the users have to twist the head portion before the metal strip is pulled. On the contrary, the connection cord can be simply pulled out from the stack of caps without twisting action and the caps need not to be made with a non-circular opening which is complicate in shape and has to be made by specific machine.

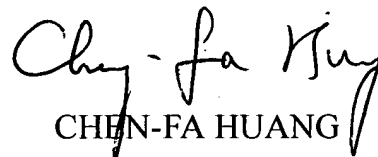
Although the metal strip of Smith et al needs not to remove any part from it as the removal of bottom limiting member 510 of Liu et al, the metal strip of Smith et al is not a single cord as claimed, and the metal strip of Smith et al has to be twisted

before being pulled out from the non-circular openings. For Liu et al, there is no disclosure or hint to suggest that the string can be maintained in one-piece and used repeatedly, for Smith et al, there is no suggestion to teach how to use a single cord cooperated with circular central holes as claimed.

It is clear that, obviousness cannot be established by combining teachings of the prior art references to produce the claimed invention, absent some teaching, suggestion or incentive supporting the combination. Applicant submits that the cited references lack any such suggestion or incentive to support the combination of the features as suggested by the Applicant. The amended claim 1 has disclosed a structure whose construction and function are quite different from and patentably distinguishable over the cited prior arts. Therefore, it is believed that, the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) should be removed, and the amended claim 1 should be allowable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant submits that the application is now in a condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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